



THIRTIETH THOUSAND.

THE DANGER AND THE EVILS
OF
DISESTABLISHMENT
AND THE
DUTY OF CHURCHMEN AT THE PRESENT CRISIS.

A
SPEECH OF
THE BISHOP OF PETERBOROUGH
AT THE
PETERBOROUGH DIOCESAN CONFERENCE
IN THE
DRILL HALL, PETERBOROUGH,
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SPEECH OF THE BISHOP OF PETERBOROUGH.

THE BISHOP OF PETERBOROUGH said,—Reverend Brethren of the Clergy, Brethren of the Laity,—Once more we meet in our diocesan conference for mutual counsel and co-operation. Once more we gather together, not to legislate for the diocese, but to consider how under our existing laws and constitutions we may best discharge the duties of our great trust as members of the National Church. Once more, too, we find that if our assembly lacks the keener interest that attaches to legislation, yet that the ever varying circumstances of our times, the new duties, or new methods of performing old duties that are ever arising round us, afford abundant scope for new thought and fresh discussion. Each year as it has come round has brought us its own subjects of interest, and often of novel and unexpected interest, and we have returned to our respective duties strengthened for their better performance by the counsel we have taken with each other. And certainly this year's programme for our conference is no exception to this rule. Our subjects for discussion lack neither interest or importance. The retirement of the clergy and of the bishops, the spiritual condition of the masses to whom the clergy are to minister, the maintenance of our National Church, the sad depreciation of clerical incomes, the home and foreign missions of the Church—these form a large and important list of subjects for discuss-

sion, and under ordinary circumstances it would have been my duty as your president to touch briefly on each of these, setting before you what seemed to be its salient points, or at least those points on which I felt myself most needed to know your opinions and to be helped by your advice.

THE POLITICAL CRISIS.

I say under ordinary circumstances and in ordinary times this would have been once more my duty. But these are not ordinary times, nor do we meet under ordinary circumstances. We meet not only in the midst of the excitement and the turmoil of one of the fiercest political contests that ever divided or distracted this country, but in the very centre and crisis of what has been truly described as the widest and deepest political revolution that we have known for the last two centuries. The centre of political power, and therefore the motive power in large measure not only of the political but of the social life of this great nation, has suddenly shifted; it has passed completely and for ever from the hands which have held it for nearly two generations to other and as yet untried possessors. Now, whether that change be the unmixed good or the unmixed evil that different persons are proclaiming it to be, or whether it be, as I believe, neither all good nor yet all evil, but just of that mixed nature which marks all human life and all human history, one thing at least is clear—namely, that it closely concerns and must profoundly affect every one of the institutions of this country. For it is clear that such a change at once and necessarily places every one of our institutions on its trial. The new electors have the right to say, and, what is more, it is their duty to say, of every one of these, "We have not created this; we have hitherto had no share in, no responsibility for, its existence or its management; now we have both, and if we would be faithful to our new trust as citizens we must examine them each and all, in order to mend or end them

according to our judgment and our conscience." Every such great change, then, as that we are now witnessing is in truth a fire which must "try every man's work." Whether it will in this case consume only the wood, hay, and stubble, or burn up more precious things than they, remains to be seen, but that it will burn on and on until it has done its Divinely appointed work is absolutely certain.

THE RIGHT OF THE NEW ELECTORATE TO PLACE THE CHURCH ON HER TRIAL.

And this, which is true of every institution, is true in an especial degree as regards that institution which is so closely entwined and interlaced with every one of the others, which touches so nearly and at so many points the political, the social, the religious life of the nation—an institution which, from the prominent position it occupies and the far-reaching influence it exerts, must be either a great national good or a great national evil—the National Church of England as by law established. We of that Church, then, have no right to complain if the new electorate sharply questions its right to existence. We have no right to complain if, instead of this questioning being delayed, as some suggest, it should be made the first and foremost question to be dealt with by the new electorate. Nor have we any right to complain if those who regard that institution as useless or mischievous should earnestly press their views upon the electorate; it is not only their right, but, from their point of view, their duty to do so. All that we have the right to expect from them is that in so doing they shall deal truthfully with facts and fairly and honestly with persons. Whether they are doing so just now is a matter on which they and we hold different opinions. Clearly, then, whether we like it or no, whether our adversaries wish it or no, the mere force of circumstances, the mere necessary pressure and influence of political and social change, is forcing into prominence the great questions involved in the

maintenance of the National Church. You will then, I venture to think, pardon me if on this occasion I depart from our usual custom, and if, instead of dealing with each one of these Church questions which appear upon our agenda paper, I deal with one, and one only, and yet one which really touches and embraces all the others—namely, “What are the new duties or difficulties, if any, what the new hopes or fears, which the revolution of 1885 brings with it for the members of the National Church?”

THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE ELECTORATE TO JUDGE.

Now if, as regards the future of the Church, I were to say what seems to be just now the correct thing and the popular and pleasant thing to say, I should say of this, as of every other institution in the country, I have no anxiety whatever as to the results of the recent political change. I should say that none of these could possibly be injuriously affected in any way, because they are now committed to the hands of the people, and that I have “unlimited trust in the wisdom of the English people.” I cannot say this, however, because I do not think it. To say that one has unlimited faith in the wisdom of the English people is only another way of saying that the wisdom of the English people is unlimited; that their decisions will always be unerringly wise, their actions unfailingly just, their judgment never hurried by impulse, warped by prejudice, clouded by passion, or misled by evil counsellors. Well, I do not believe this of any people under the sun. I hold that nations, which are only collections of individuals, are, like individuals, liable to impulses, influences, temptations, which often obscure judgment and distort from right action. I hold that nations may, as they have done in times past and will do to the end of time, often do things which they live to regret with a vain and late repentance when passion has subsided and calmer and better informed

judgment has taken its place. Besides, I have an old-fashioned habit of dissecting cant phrases by asking those who use them to define their terms, and in this case I ask those who demand my acceptance of their new formula to define the word **PEOPLE**. It means, I presume, or it ought to mean, not this or that section of the people but the entire nation, or, to put it practically at this moment, the entire English electorate. Well, before I say that I have unlimited trust in the wisdom of the English electorate it is I hope not disrespectful to ask what does the English electorate say of itself? I turn to the electorate and I see that it is divided into large and contending sections, each of whom loudly proclaims its deep distrust of the others. If I listen to one set of politicians and their followers I hear that their opponents are utterly without patriotism, principle, or common sense, and if I turn to those so described they tell me precisely the same things of their accusers; and if I put both these declarations together I am driven to the conclusion that there is not an ounce of sense, or patriotism, or honesty in the whole electorate, and yet I am to have implicit trust in this electorate. I am told by A. deeply to distrust B. I am told by B. to have no confidence in C. I am solemnly warned by C. against listening to D. and so on through all the letters; and then I am told to repose unlimited confidence in the entire alphabet. I am puzzled.

THE PART OF TRUE STATESMEN TO LEAD THE PEOPLE.

But does the word *people* mean, not the whole nation, but the majority of the nation? Then I ask why am I to place unlimited confidence in a majority? Are majorities always in the right? Have they never in times past been in the wrong? Have minorities never been in the right? Is it so in private life? Are the majority of each man's acquaintance here persons in whom he reposes unlimited confidence, and, if not, why must it be so in public life? For my part, I am unable to trust im-

plicitly in the purifying and elevating influences of the multiplication table or to believe in the infallibility of the odd man. I cannot say that if of a given number of persons—say 1000—501 think one way and 499 the other way that the 501 must therefore necessarily be right and the 499 necessarily wrong. I hold that there may be as much unwisdom and, what is more, as much injustice and tyranny where the many govern the few as where the few govern the many; and further, that if there be such tyranny it is the more hopeless and the more universally present tyranny of the two. I hold that there may be a *civium ardor prava jubentium* as well as the *vultus instantis tyranni*. I do not hold therefore that it is the duty of statesmen simply to shout with the largest crowd, or, as it has been more elegantly phrased of late, “to be always a little in advance of each popular movement”—a rule of action which, if the distinguished author of it had been living in Jerusalem on the first Good Friday in the history of Christendom, must have made him the first to cry, “not this man, but Barabbas.” I do not hold it to be the sole duty of statesmen simply to ascertain public opinion and then to give effect to it, because I believe that we shall all have one day to answer for all our actions before a tribunal whose decisions are not likely to be framed with much regard for public opinion.

THE WAGE-EARNING CLASSES IMPRESSIONABLE AND EASILY LED.

Or does this phrase “the people” mean, what in the mouths of many who are now using it, it does mean, “Trust implicitly the new electorate,” “believe in the absolute wisdom of the wage-earning classes of Great Britain.” I ask again Why? Are they wiser, better, more calm judging than all the rest, and, if not, why am I to trust them more than any other class? Observe, I am not saying they are less worthy of trust. I do not think so. I only ask why they should be so much more so that I should trust them implicitly above all other

men? If you ask me what I really think of these new electors I can say, and say truly, that I think them no worse and no better than the rest, having their full average share with the rest of honesty and justice and intelligence, and that therefore I expect that as a class, and a class in possession of power, they will display, like all other classes, the merits and the defects of their order. They will have their class aspirations, class interests, class prejudices, class temptations, just like other men, and they will act, as other classes have done, with varying wisdom and justice according as they do or do not rise to a higher level of citizenship than that of the class and the class only. And this much more I will say for them, and that sincerely, that I have far more trust in their honesty and justice, than I have in the honesty and justice of many who are just now posing as their only true friends and advisers. King Demos has come of age and is being crowned. I believe him to be a youthful monarch of much promise with the best intentions, generous in the main, kindly and honest. But I see him, like other youthful monarchs, already surrounded by a crowd of fawning and flattering courtiers, offering for their own ends to indulge all his desires, to minister to all his passions, and assuring him, as courtiers, have done before, that he is the best, the wisest, the noblest of all monarchs. Nay, I see his Court already so fully completed that he is provided even with Court chaplains as cringing and obsequious aa Court chaplains have been of old, and who are just now busy preparing for his use a new edition of the old Church catechism in which he shall read that his duty to his neighbour is to covet and desire other men's goods, and *not* to keep his tongue from lying. As I see all this, as I see how history repeats itself, as I see how the flattery of a multitude may be as base and as depraving as the flattery of a monarch, as I see how many and how pernicious are the influences to which the people are now being subjected—a people whom one who knew them well because he loved them

well and whom they loved and trusted as perhaps they have never loved or trusted any other man, the great and good Lord Shaftesbury, described as “impressionable and easily led”—I cannot say that I repose unlimited confidence in the wisdom of the working classes of this country, and I am not altogether without anxiety when I see them suddenly called on to decide great and difficult social and political problems which we are told “have baffled for ages the wisdom of philosophers and statesmen.”

NOT LARGELY HOSTILE TO THE CHURCH, AND LIKELY TO
HELP FORWARD REFORM.

On the other hand, I do not think, I am far from thinking, that the working classes of this country are largely hostile to the Church or are likely to cast their solid vote against her. I know how many of our working men are not only attached, but intelligent Churchmen, knowing perfectly well why they are so, and in no way disposed to see the Church they love stripped of all her possessions, including those gifts which they themselves have so largely and so self-denyingly bestowed upon her, or to see themselves deprived of their inherited rights as English citizens in the English Church. I know, too, how many there are who, though not of her fold, bear her no such hate as that attributed to them, and have no desire to see her impoverished and her great work crippled and hindered for years to come at the bidding of any political party in the State; and I am persuaded that this will be seen whenever this question comes, as it must ultimately come, before the constituencies as a single issue. When the question for each voter will be, not “Shall I vote for this or that candidate *although* he is in favour of disestablishment?” but “Shall I vote for him *because* he is in favour of it?” and when they know, as they do not yet know, what disestablishment and disendowment really mean, what they mean not merely for the parson and the

Church, but for themselves and their children—when that time comes I expect that it will disappoint many hopes and some fears that fill men's minds at present. And not only then, but now, do I look for help for the Church from the working classes. I look for their help now in a most important branch of Church defence, I mean Church reform. I fully believe and hope that their advent to electoral power may help forward more than one reform that I and others have vainly striven for heretofore, and I am neither ashamed nor afraid, in the presence of this assembly, to say that I for one am glad to be able to plead for the reform of abuses in the Church with those who have no pecuniary nor class interest in maintaining them, and who only know them by the spiritual injury and moral offence they are and have long been to themselves.

THE DEFENCE OF THE CHURCH BY SUPPLYING INFORMATION TO THE IGNORANT, AN URGENT DUTY.

Be this, however, as it may, it is before the new electorate that the Church of England is now arraigned and before it she has to plead her cause. What, then, in the view of this fact, is our present duty? **IN THE FIRST PLACE, IT IS CLEARLY OUR DUTY NOT TO SUFFER JUDGMENT TO GO BY DEFAULT.** If our enemies are busy everywhere stating their case against us, stating it persistently, ably, plausibly, then we must, as persistently, and I venture to think as persuasively and as ably, state our case in reply. We can no longer remain indifferent to these attacks in the belief, in which I myself long shared, that the best defence of the Church was her work; in the confidence that the English people would never suffer the confiscation of revenues which were so manifestly being used more and more for the highest and best interests of the nation; in the belief that the long and noble history of the Church, the record of all the services she has rendered to, and the gifts she has bestowed

upon, the nation in times past, and is rendering and bestowing now—services and gifts which make it far more true to say we have a Church-made and a Church-paid State than that we have a State-paid and State-made Church—might have sufficiently pleaded for her against those whose cry is, “Down with her to the ground.” We should have remembered that, as regards the past, gratitude is but a feeble force as against religious rivalries and political ambitions in the present, while as to the success of her labours we should have remembered that it is just this very fact which so whets the eager impatience of her assailants. They see plainly enough how rapid has been her growth, how large her successes in the cause of Christianity, and all those who hate that cause, and they are many, and all those who, though they do not hate it, cannot endure that the strengthening of it should indirectly strengthen an Institution that they detest, know well that their time for injuring her is short, that give her but a few years of progress such as she has made in recent years, and she may afford to smile at her adversaries, and that, therefore, it is “now or never” with them, and what they do they must do quickly if at all. For these reasons I am compelled to come to the conclusion that Church Defence in one form or another has become the plain and imperative duty of all Churchmen. We are assured, indeed, on high authority, that disestablishment “lies in the courses of the dim and distant future.” It may be so, but assuredly the commencement of the struggle which is to decide that great question lies in the near and immediate present. We cannot any longer stand by and see the ground on which our Church rests undermined before our eyes in all directions, and trains laid which even in the distant future are to bring her battlements to the ground. We can no longer listen in silence to accusations which we believe to be unjust, statements of history and of fact, which we believe to be absurdly false, assertions of principles which we hold to be

perilously unsound, and practical proposals which we regard as simply iniquitous, all largely spread abroad among the people without denial or refutation from us. The time has come, then, at last when we must unite in the task of defending our Church from these attacks, and we have at least this to thank our adversaries for, that they have at last roused and united us for that task almost as one man, and they may find, therefore, that the result of their at last plain and naked statement of all that they propose to do to us may have been just a little premature; that it may not only have roused and united apathetic Churchmen, but have shocked the conscience and religious feeling of many who are not Churchmen, and that the Church, thus fairly brought to bay, may not prove so easy a prey as they have flattered themselves it would.

THE NEW ELECTORATE WILL REGARD THE QUESTION IN A PRACTICAL LIGHT ONLY.

At any rate we are, with a few insignificant exceptions, agreed that Churchmen must now defend their Church. And when we engage in this work of Church defence we have, I think, gained one great advantage from the change in the tribunal before which we are to plead. That change has greatly cleared and simplified the issues to be tried. The audiences to whom we are now to address ourselves will not be greatly swayed by some of the older arguments *pro* or *con.* which were once in such vogue in this controversy. They will not trouble themselves with arguments for an Establishment culled from the Old Testament or arguments for the voluntary system drawn from the New with which rival controversialists used to pelt each other in days gone by; nor will they, I think, be deeply moved even by any high abstract theory of national recognition of Religion, or as to what does or does not constitute a Christian State. The considerations which I am persuaded will influence their decision, which are already influencing it, will be just two, broad, simple, easily intelligible. They are **JUSTICE** and **UTILITY**.

They will ask these two questions and no others:—First, is it just and fair that there should be in this country an Established and Endowed Church? Second, what use is it to us and the nation, what the better are we for it, and what shall we gain or lose by its removal? These two questions—that of right and wrong, and that of profit and loss—are the two which we shall be called upon to answer before our new rulers. Well, we Churchmen shrink from neither issue—nay, we rejoice that it is on these two issues our cause is to be tried. For it is precisely in these two we believe its strength to lie.

DISESTABLISHMENT AND DISENDOWMENT GROSSLY UNJUST TO THE CHURCH.

We believe that we can show, and easily show, the working classes that it is not just for the State to seize on property which it did not give, and which was never given to it; that it is not just to confiscate every single shilling ever given for the endowment of the Church by pious donors—from the thane or the burgher of a thousand years ago down to the mechanic and artisan of yesterday; that it is not just to evict, without compensation, a tenant (if, as is alleged, the Church has all along been only the tenant of the nation), a tenant of such long standing, a tenant that has expended within the present century many millions of money in improving the landlord's property; that it is not just to seize upon the churches which Churchmen have built, rebuilt, and restored at a cost of some thirty millions within the last forty years, and reckon them up among the assets of the great Church bankruptcy sale, which the nation is asked to carry out; that it is not just to deprive the poor of their right to free religion and free entrance into their own parish church. I think we have a case here on grounds of justice and equity that is worth stating, and we mean to state it.

A WRONG TO THE COUNTRY, TO THE POOR, AND TO
POSTERITY.

And as regards the question of profit and loss, the question whether the Nation, whether the working classes will gain or lose most by disestablishment and disendowment, here, too, our case is strong. On the one side of the account we place a certain sum of money, greatly exaggerated in amount, greatly to be discounted, not only by payment of life interests, but by the heavy cost of providing State education to replace those voluntary schools which Churchmen will be no longer able to maintain, and by the building everywhere of Board school-rooms to replace those now owned by Church managers, which they are not going in that case to make a present of to the State, and which not even the coolest of liberators has yet claimed to be property belonging to the State. We admit, however, when all these deductions have been made there will remain a balance more or less large to the State. Then let us set against that the material loss to the working classes of all their share in the incomes of the clergy—how large will never be known until that overflowing source of kindly and liberal help shall have been dried up—the decay and perishing of those charitable and philanthropic agencies in each parish of which the parson is for the most part the promoter, the mainspring, and the liberal supporter, and all those larger charities now mainly supported by Churchmen which make the Established Church the largest philanthropic institution in the country, and from which the money of Churchmen, suddenly called on to supply some three or four millions a year for the support of their ministers, must, in large measure, and for long while, be withdrawn. Put all these together on the debtor side of the account, and the mere money balance to the working man's credit may not prove so large as he is told it will be. Put next to this the moral loss to the State of three or four millions a year devoted now to the moral and religious training of her citizens, which has been ridiculously described as

“a benefit to one sect alone,” but which is obviously a vast benefit to the entire nation. Set next to this the loss to the parishioners, and especially to the poor parishioner, of all religious ministrations and all Church privileges, save those he pays for. Put the handing over of his old parish church to a committee of ratepayers, of whom he not being a ratepayer cannot be one, to be kept up, no one exactly knows how, certainly not as heretofore by the free gifts of Churchmen, who will not care to contribute to the maintenance of a parish hall, which may be a concert-room to-day and a polling place to-morrow, to be sold, to be even pulled down and the materials carted away, if this committee shall so determine; put the removal from the midst of every parish of the only property in it charged with duties on the performance of which its enjoyment is conditioned, and the only person in many a village who is independent of squire and peer and people—an independence which makes the Church of England the true home and shelter of religious freedom. Set, in short, on one side the little money that the working man may gain, and on the other side all the material and moral losses he must sustain by disestablishment and disendowment; show him, in short, that it is not the parson but himself and his children after him that he is disendowing and disinheriting, and he may not be so ready as some think to sell his birthright and theirs, even for a larger mess of pottage than that which is offered him in its stead.

THE PUBLISHED SCHEME FOR DISESTABLISHMENT.

But before informing the electorate it is important that Churchmen should thoroughly inform themselves; that they should learn what disestablishment and disendowment practically mean. Disestablishment and disendowment are phrases, and may mean a great deal or very little, according as men interpret them. And for this reason they are just now very

convenient phrases for slippery politicians, who can proclaim their adhesion to the phrase and leave in convenient obscurity its practical meaning. But what we want to get at, and what the country wants to get at, is, not the *words* disestablishment and disendowment, but the real actual *facts* of disestablishment and disendowment in this country as they are to be. Now, on this point our adversaries have given us very full and very precise information. They tell us very plainly what they mean by these words; and I recommend therefore all Churchmen to study their programme very carefully. It is not very pleasant reading, but it is highly instructive, and for this reason—that if ever disestablishment is carried out in this country it will be on those lines and no other, and that for two good and sufficient reasons. First; that the party which may be strong enough to carry it will certainly be strong enough to carry it on their own lines. I remember, if others have forgotten, the history of the disestablishment of the Irish Church. I remember how the scruples of many were quieted by assurances (not, I am bound to say, from the author of the measure, but from many of its advocates), that if only its principle were adopted there was room for any amount of concession and compromise as to its details; and I remember how, when its principle was adopted, the concessions and compromises were sent upon a journey to Jupiter. As it was then, so will it be again, and so our assailants are telling us with a frankly cynical candour. Mr. Gladstone, in his recent utterance on this subject, which, if it has all the solemnity and impressiveness, has also, I venture to think, a little of the ambiguity of the ancient oracle, tells us that if ever it is effected it will be with “a large regard to equity and liberality.” Well, I turn to the programme of those who, if ever it is done, will have the doing of it, and I find that they give by anticipation a flat denial to Mr. Gladstone’s prophecy. They say that disestablishment is to be effected on the principle of “justice to the nation and *not* of generosity to the Church,” and certainly they are as good as their word.

Whether there is or is not equity in their proposals, liberality there is none, and they themselves disclaim it. Secondly; there is another reason why we should regard this programme as the real and practical form which disestablishment must take if it ever comes to pass—namely, that it professes to be the only too “scrupulous” and “tender” application of the great principles of justice and of religious equality on which it is founded, and that it cannot therefore be materially altered without departing from those principles.

THE DESECRATING OF CATHEDRALS AND PARISH CHURCHES.

Let us test this by just one instance. I pass by all those money considerations about which we Churchmen alone are supposed to care, and respecting which we are expected to display that lofty and high-toned indifference which men so easily counsel when dealing with other men’s goods. I do not dwell on the harsh and ungenerous treatment of the clergy, as regards their life interests, a point on which, without the ultimate loss of a single shilling, the State might easily afford to be generous. I pass by what I cannot but describe as the really impudent attempt to force upon us a new system of State-made Congregationalism foreign to our ecclesiastical system, with the all-but avowed desire of breaking up the Church into “indefinite groups,” and in the avowed hope that this may produce a crop of future schisms. I pass by these and other proposals, marked one and all by the same spirit of rancorous hate to the Church, not as an establishment, but as a religious institution, calculated, one and all, with malignant ingenuity to hinder her work and weaken her efficiency as a religious body after her disestablishment. I pass by these, and I fix upon one, and one only. I take from this programme the mode in which it is proposed to deal with our cathedrals and older parish churches, some 10,000 in number, and I ask you to note what religious equality means as regards these. They are all to be seized

on by the State as national property, and they are then to be all secularised. The cathedrals are to be so at once. They are to become "national monuments" (whatever that may mean), and to be used for religious and also for secular uses under the control of Parliament. And as regards our older parish churches, these are to be vested in committees of ratepayers, to be used as they please without any reservation for religious uses. Now I need not point out to you that a place no longer set apart for religious worship only, and which may at any time be used for any secular purpose, is in principle and to all intents and purposes secularized. But in this case the secularizing would certainly and speedily become a fact. For even if these ratepayers' committees were everywhere willing to reserve the churches for religious purposes only, they would not be long allowed to do so. How long do you suppose that a Parliament which was itself putting cathedrals to secular purposes would allow these parochial committees to refuse the use of like national property for like purposes? Such a power would not be left them for five years. The first half dozen refusals would raise a cry from the Secularist, for the tearing away of this "last rag" of intolerance and religious ascendancy which would only be too willingly listened to, and the parish churches would follow suit with the cathedrals. And this the authors of this programme very well know, though just now it does not suit them to say it. Now, I will not ask how the nation would be better served by such a proceeding. I will not stop to ask whether the general sentiment of religious reverence would not receive from it a deep and lasting injury; but I will only say this—it is a certain fact that the doing of this thing would cause the most exquisite pain to all Churchmen, that through the heart of every Church man and woman in the country there would run at the sight of it a thrill of pain and indignation far keener than any that could be caused by the loss of their endowments; and our assailants know this. Now, I ask them, why do you do this? Why do you propose to inflict this deep and painful wound upon the hearts

of your fellow citizens? Is it because you hate them and their Church, and that you seek to wound them for the mere wounding sake? You would indignantly deny the imputation. You would tell us, "We are bound to do this on principle; the great and sacred principle of religious equality compels us to do it. We must admit to the use of these national edifices all or none." The plea is on their principles perfectly valid. The State, we are told, has no right and no competence to distinguish between the relative worth of different religions. Neither, of course, has it the right nor the competence to distinguish between the relative worth of religion and secularism. The ratepayer who claims the use of the cathedral for a secular purpose has exactly the same right with the ratepayer who claims it for a religious one. The politician who wishes to harangue his constituents, the social democrat who finds the use of the street inconvenient or insufficient, would have just the same right to avail himself of the area of St. Paul's for his assembly that the Nonconformist minister would have to avail himself of it for his. To grant it to the Nonconformist and refuse it to the Politician would be manifestly as unjust as it would be to grant it to the Churchman and refuse it to the Nonconformist. Mr. Bradlaugh on this principle has as good a right to the use of the pulpit of Westminster Abbey as Mr. Newman Hall or Mr. Parker. This is only justice, and depend upon it it is justice which would be promptly claimed and as promptly conceded. The Secularist wing of the Liberationists you may be very sure are not going to let their religious allies march into our churches and then close the doors in their faces. And if, on the other hand, I am told that, the Cathedrals being National property, Parliament would have the right to regulate the use of them as it pleased, and that no one would have any claim of right to their use, then, I ask, what becomes of the great argument that, all Church property being National property, the State has no right to confine its use to one sect? If the State has the right to give the use of its property to some

and not to all, it has just the same right to give it to one only and not to some. I give the Liberationist, then, the choice of this dilemma. Either the State has or it has not the right to make a choice among rival claimants for the use of its property. If it has, then there is no injustice in its giving it to or leaving it with its present possessors. If it has not, then the Secularist and the infidel are unjustly treated if they are denied their share of it. We know already which of these alternatives the Liberationist accepts and must accept, and we know, too, that he does not shrink from its logical consequences.

DISESTABLISHMENT CARRIED INTO DETAIL.

There are, of course, a few practical difficulties of detail in carrying it out. The little difficulty, for instance, for Parliament to decide, without exercising any "State control over religion," in what order and on what principle all the 172 sects in London, to say nothing of the politicians, secularists, and infidel lecturers, are to have their turn in using St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey. Is it to be first come first served, with a scramble and free fight at the doors? Or is it to be by payment from the highest bidder? Or is it to be by ballot, as admission is given to the gallery of the House of Commons? There is, again, the little "unconsidered trifle" of the Communion plate. We Churchmen have, you know, a weak feeling of reverence for this, which in the eyes of a large number of Liberators is a stupid superstition. Are these, then, to be deprived of their just and equal share of this portion of the loot they would have helped to win? and, if not, how are they to obtain it? Is it to be placed in the British Museum as a glorious trophy of disestablishment, or sold by auction, or sent to the melting-pot? Something of this kind must clearly be done with it on the sacred principles of religious equality. To give it to us would be "generosity to the Church," and not "justice to the nation;" to reserve it for those sects which use

sacraments would be concurrent endowment ; and so it, too, must in some way or other be put to secular uses. So that, in short, the sacred principle of religious equality would before long be the only sacred thing left in our churches. These latter points, however, are only questions of detail, more especially that of the Church plate, for directing their attention to which I hope the Liberationists will be duly grateful to me. What I have wanted to show you is how inevitably, on the principles laid down by our assailants, all that they propose must come to pass, and a little more besides, and so to show you how fond and foolish are the dreams of some men that disestablishment and disendowment can be carried out on *their* principles or in any other way than that proposed.

THE DUTY OF CHURCHMEN TO COMBINE AND ACT AT ONCE.

There remains but one other question—as to the duties of Churchmen in the present crisis. They have not only to inform the electorate, they are themselves electors, and, as such, have a very solemn duty to discharge to Church and State. There is much that I could say on this point; nevertheless, I shall say but very little, because I am anxious, as your chairman, to keep well within the limits of our wise rule against the introduction of party politics into our discussions here. I will venture, then, only to say this much—that, speaking for myself and myself only, I regard the question whether the Church of England shall or shall not be maintained as the National Church as involving issues far more momentous, far wider and further reaching, than the questions whether this or that party should be in or out of office. If any Churchman think otherwise, if he either desire disestablishment, or if, though not desiring it, he honestly believes that it is better for the country that the Church should be distablished and disendowed than that his party should be out of office, he will, of course, act according to his conscientious convictions. I do not envy his

responsibility ; I am thankful I do not share it. One thing more, and one only, I have to say on this matter. If any weak-kneed Churchman, now hesitating between his party and his Church, is trying to persuade himself that this question will not come on in this Parliament, and therefore that for this once he may indulge his political preferences and let the Church take her chance for the next elections, let him lay to heart the clear warnings that have been given us lately on this point. We have been plainly and honestly told of late, by more than one candidate for Parliament, that should Mr. Gladstone's departure from Parliamentary life take place during this session the question will be assuredly raised. I respect the rough honesty of such a candidate. He reminds me of a certain rough man long ago who, being on bad terms with his brother, was heard to say, "The days of mourning for my father are at hand, then will I kill my brother." And, though the Church has not Jacob's reason for flight, though she has not cheated this Esau of either birthright or blessing, nay, though in this case it is Esau who is seeking to deprive his brother of both, still, we may do well to note what we hear him say, and not to be too sure that he may not try to keep his word. At any rate, it seems to me that speculations as to the actions of a new Parliament are a perilously narrow basis on which to rest the future of our Church, and that the simpler and the straighter course is, in this as in other matters, the safer one.

THE RELATIVE WEIGHT OF THE FORCES ON EITHER SIDE
CONSIDERED.

I think, too, that this is the course into which the Church is being rapidly forced. The Church of England is naturally of no political party. I have said before, and I say here again, the Church of Christ has no politics ; the Establishment may easily have too much. But, I see plainly enough that there is a party rising in this country, a new but

a very powerful one, and that is the Church herself. I see that the violent pressure of her enemies on all sides is rapidly moulding the Church into one great party, the members of which shall have one watchward and one only—"We are Churchmen first and politicians after. We will not fail to use our electoral privileges against those, of whatever party, who seek to injure an institution which is doing so great a work for the country and for God." When that attitude shall have been finally taken by the Church—and it is being rapidly taken—there will be formed in the country a party the strength of which statesmen have not yet calculated, but with which they may yet have to reckon. I say this in no boastful spirit, in no lightness of heart. We Churchmen have no love for such strife as is now being forced upon us. We dread the effect which our engaging in it may have upon the higher work to which, if we were allowed to do so, we would fain give all our thoughts and all our efforts. But we are not allowed to do so. Sorely against our will, we are compelled to interrupt the building of the walls of our Zion in order to man them for her defence. The issues of that contest no man can forecast. The forces arrayed against us are undoubtedly many and powerful—the fierce hate of atheism in strange and ominous alliance with the sincerity of deep religious conviction ; sectarian and social jealousy, with its misleading but popular cry of religious and social equality ; the attractive power of a great money bribe held steadily before the eyes of all, and specially pressed upon the poorer classes ; the ambition of politicians eager to win place and power by dazzling promises which the wealth of the Church they declare will enable them to fulfil ; the temptation to statesmen to replenish a failing exchequer by seizing upon a fund which lies so conveniently to their hand. All these are against us, and I do not underrate their strength. On the other hand, there are on our side the love of English Churchmen for their Church, deepening, as it will deepen with each fresh assault

upon her; the increasing dread on the part of all religious men of those irreligious and anti-religious forces which are being arrayed against her, the very fact of whose bitter hostility shows that not religion but infidelity may in the end be the gainer by her overthrow; the reckless havoc of the schemes proposed for her destruction; the growing knowledge of the spiritual needs of our great masses, and therefore the conviction of the folly and wickedness of at once arresting and paralyzing for generations to come the great work of the largest and most successful organization we possess for the supply of those needs—these are on our side, and on it, too, is that quiet force of sober and serious opinion, which though it is not easily stirred or roused, though it does not cry aloud and utter its voice at every turn in the streets, yet that when it is stirred has so often spoken with so resolute and often so decisive a voice. These are the forces that make for our cause; and if there be but time for them to tell, if the fate of our Church, as of other institutions, be not decided by some wave of popular impulse, some impatient demand of popular need, if the loosely-packed cargo of public feeling and sentiment does not suddenly lurch over to one side in the gust of some passing storm, I should have confidence in the result. I have said that I have not implicit confidence in the absolute wisdom of the English or of any people; nevertheless I have large confidence in two qualities that do honourably distinguish them—their deep sense of justice, their practical common sense. I cannot but hope, therefore, that the English people, in its calmer moments, when the whole case of the English Church has been fully before them, will think once, twice, thrice before they cast away the blessings she gives them for the vague promises of very doubtful blessings that are to come in her place. I believe that there is still in the heart of the nation left some reverence for the past, some love of old ways and old institutions, not merely because they are old but because their very age proves their strength and worth, and be-

cause that age is neither senile nor decrepid but vigorous and strong as ever, stronger and more vigorous than ever for the service of the nation. I believe that they will hesitate to change the old historical Church of England for the brand new State-made contrivances with which it is proposed to replace her. I do, therefore, trust and hope that at the last, when all the issues of this great contest are fully and fairly before them, their answer will be given in the spirit of those noble lines in which a great English clergyman recorded his esteem and love for one of the noblest of English statesmen—

“ Often have I seen

“ A stripling tree all foliage and all green,
“ But not a hope of grateful soothing shade,
“ Its empty strength in fluttering leaves displayed.
“ Give me the solid trunk, the aged stem
“ That rears aloft its glorious diadem;
“ That through long years of battle or of storm
“ Has striven whole forests round it to reform;
“ That still through lightning flash and thunderstroke,
“ Retains his vital sap and heart of oak.
“ Such gallant tree for me shall ever stand
“ A great rock’s shadow in a weary land.”

